



Leroy Gilge

April 28, 1946 - May 15, 2025

Dr. Leroy W. Gilge always loved an adventure and now, he's embarked on his greatest and final one. He passed away May 15, 2025, while visiting family in Lake Chelan, WA. He was born April 28, 1946, into a ranching and farming family in Killdeer, ND. His brother, Rodney was his best friend, and he took to heart his mother's instruction to always watch over their youngest brother, Martin. At age 7, his family moved to Genesee, ID, where a new chapter began. As a boy in Idaho, Leroy stood out being the only kid at school in bib overalls until he eventually grew out of them and into himself.

Leroy excelled in school, played football, enjoyed the company of friends, and found joy in farm life, spending countless hours on tractors and combines. He graduated from Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, WA, in 1967 and went on to earn his Doctor of Optometry from Pacific University in Forest Grove, OR, in 1971.

To fund his education, Leroy was never afraid of hard work. No job was too menial: he farmed every school break, dug ditches and drain fields by hand, delivered shingles from a lumber yard to rooftops, and drove school buses for both Tacoma school children and PLU students.

Leroy met Ruth (Onstad) Gilge while attending Pacific Lutheran University, and the two married in 1970. Toward the end of Leroy's optometry school studies, the couple set out on a road trip through small towns in Oregon, searching for the right place to establish his practice. They found that the farming town of Silverton did not yet have an optometrist. Drawn to its charm

and close-knit community, they decided to make Silverton their home. Beyond his work as an optometrist in Silverton, Leroy gave back tirelessly to the community. He served on the Silver Falls School Board and the Silverton City Planning Commission. His dedication to Immanuel Lutheran Church was especially deep. He served on church boards, helped rebuild the sanctuary years ago, and personally crafted much of the church sanctuary woodwork. A man of faith and service, Leroy treasured the simple joys of church life, especially the fellowship and conversations during after-service coffee hour. Leroy was also deeply involved with the Boy Scouts, guiding many young men toward their Eagle Scout Awards, often spending weekends hiking through the wilderness or sleeping in ice caves. At home, he was a voracious reader, a loyal Garrison Keillor fan, and the neighbor kids could count on him to help with projects, no matter how big or small. He lived for camping, fishing, and good conversation.

Even as years passed, Leroy stayed connected with friends and family from North Dakota, Idaho, and Oregon, often calling and chatting with people he'd known for 60 years or more. His life was rich in love, friendship, faith, and purpose.

Leroy's greatest pride was his family: his wife, Ruth; his daughters: Rebecca (Scott) Benson and Janelle (Joel) Unger; and his cherished grandchildren: George and Rachel Benson. He is also remembered lovingly by his brothers: Rod (Sharon) Gilge and Martin (Kim) Gilge; as well as many nieces, nephews, and cousins. He was preceded in death by his parents, Clarence Gilge and Audrey (Robison) Gilge of Genesee, ID.

Memorials may be given to Immanuel Lutheran Church in Silverton, Oregon. A Celebration of Life will be held on June 21, 2025, at 10:00 AM at Immanuel Lutheran Church, 303 N Church St, Silverton, OR. All are welcome.

Please leave your thoughts and memories at www.prechtrose.com. Precht Rose Chapel is assisting the family with arrangements.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

JUN 21. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (PT)

Immanuel Lutheran Church
303 N, Church St
Silverton, WA

Tribute Wall

JP

“ I got to know Dr. Gilge at our state OOPA meetings. I remember him as a kind, gentle man who was always there getting education and skills to stay on top of his profession. I know he was a well respected man in his community and a fine doctor. His death will leave a huge void in his family, his community, and his profession of optometry. My sincere condolences.

Jack Perkins, OD

Eugene

Jack Perkins - June 02, 2025 at 07:35 PM